

1-1-2011

## Transformational Leadership: Operating in an Abundant State of Mind by Capitalizing on Tangible and Intangible Resources

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### Recommended Citation

Cain, Darrell and Picquet, Jim (2011) "Transformational Leadership: Operating in an Abundant State of Mind by Capitalizing on Tangible and Intangible Resources," *Academic Leadership: The Online Journal*: Vol. 9 : Iss. 1 , Article 53.  
Available at: <https://scholars.fhsu.edu/alj/vol9/iss1/53>

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# Academic Leadership Journal

## Background

We have come into a time where there is of scarcity of resources, where colleges and universities are being pulled in different directions by many of its constituents, and state politicians are jockeying for which policies that they want to implement with limited or no resources to support them, which makes the support for higher education even more scant. If there was not a more urgent time to have a different mindset to transform a college or university this decade, then there likely will not be one. Knowing the obstacles in which higher education institutions need to overcome, the leadership of a college or university needs to be transformational in how it operates, thinks, and maneuvers.

The state of Texas, similar to other states, received news that there was going to be a budget shortfall of 5% the fiscal year (2009) and an additional 5% the following fiscal year (2010). The total amount for the state budget was going from an \$11 billion surplus to an \$18 billion shortfall between 2009 and 2010 (Talbert, 2010). State institutions were informed to give back previous awarded funding and reduce their budgets for the following fiscal year. There are no easy fixes for problems such as this. The typical approach to budget reductions is to increase tuition rates, reduce staff, and place stringent holds on college's resources. Continuing with this type of philosophy does not capitalize on the colleges and universities assets; more so, it does the opposite and limits the college's position in the marketplace. The success and sustainability of higher education institutions calls for new plan of action to operate under the guidance that there is abundance of resources that needs to be drawn upon to maximize the college's potential.

Recently, the Chancellor of the Dallas County Community College District, Wright L. Lassiter, asked the staff members to read a book called *Community College is on the Horizon: Challenge, Choice, or Abundance*. The book focuses on how colleges can achieve a state of success, create value, leverage resources and opportunities by employing a different model in which the organization operates (Richard Alfred, 2009). This is where the abundance theory mindset comes into place. It calls for organizations to have exceptional performances within the organization by utilizing and leveraging its resources. Christopher Shults (2008) describes abundance as "an organizational state marked by exceptional performance and vitality reached only through intentional and transcendent leveraging of tangible resources (e.g., staff, money, technology, facilities), intangible resources (e.g., human capabilities, culture, reputation, organizational architecture), and leadership resources (i.e., inclusive leadership practices)." Strong and healthy organizations reach and demonstrate their potential by maximizing and capitalizing on the resources that are available to them despite any marginalization, competition, or dynamic shifts outside of the organization because they hold abreast the greatest commodity which is there capacity of knowledge and talent (Shults, 2008).

The challenge becomes how does a college reach a state of abundance? Obviously, there is no simple answer to this particular question. However, there is a mindset that needs to be established at the leadership level which trickles down to all staff members and alike. This is where leadership

provides transformation within the organization. Transformational Leadership starts with the development of a vision, a view of the future that will excite and convert potential followers (Boga & Ensari, 2009). The action that takes place is that the followers within organization become inspired and develop their own leadership capacity. Once human potential capacity has been reached, that is when abundant transformation takes place.

The Lecroy Center, which serves as the educational technology center for the district, was provided with an opportunity to think of how it can reach a state of abundance. Similar to other entities within the district, the center was focused on the amount of dollars and revenues that can be generated, rather than how to gain leverage by empowering its staff members and maximizing its resources to gain added value.

There were three critical areas in which members of the educational technology staff chose to focus on because they provided the most opportunities to reach a state of abundance. The staff recognized that several markets were not being explored in its full-scale and there was a wealth of talent within these departmental areas. The primary opportunities that the staff pursued was improving day-to-day administrative operations, utilization of technology for military course instruction, and teaching and learning opportunities with technology.

### **A Paradigm Shifts in Abundance Thinking for Administration**

To be abundant has required looking at how administrators need to manage to lower costs. Through efficient use of technology and a different mindset about saving time and moving people, administrators must change how they work. The Dallas County community college District is a seven campus system and has locations across the Dallas County area serving 80,000 students. Each of the individual campuses is separately accredited but operates as one organization unit. All administrators, faculty, and staff have computer workstations that have multiple systems access points on a shared networking system.

Two of networking systems that is used across the district includes the use of DATATEL , which is an administrative suite that captures an host the districts student information systems (DATAEL, 2010), and Wimba Pronto, which is a instant communication system that provides real time audio and video conferencing (Wimba, 2009). These two systems have increased the productivity, increase efficiency, and reduce cost for the district by taking advantage of the sophistication of these tools.

Staff now has access to the DATATEL systems while working through the Wimba conferencing network. Instead of having a continuous number of meetings in which staff may have to travel across the Dallas County area, they can now have a conference over the networking system that will allow them to interact with one another as if they were in a face-to-face format. There is no need to bring printed reports of student records because the information can be captured and previewed by all collaborators.

Productivity has improved because the amount of time that it takes to drive across campuses has been greatly reduced and staff may now focus on other time sensitive projects. The cost savings from gas and mileage reimbursements from the reduced traveling has allowed the district to place additional funding into other priority areas. Many groups have enjoyed other major advantages from the new system, including the potential for electronic agenda display and the generation of group minutes to archive for future reference.

Administrators have been encouraged to consider using social networking tools to achieve change, and employing Google tools and applications to achieve more office efficiency. Such tools allow for more efficient collaboration across the district without placing additional stress on its current infrastructure adding any additional cost. Increasing the use of such tools has allowed the district to add value to its current state and leverage its position by becoming more efficient, inclusive, and transparent as an organization.

### **Abundance About Utilizing Technology Military Course Instruction**

Active duty US military personnel have had some form of education as part of their lives since General Washington held basic weapons training for farmers who fought the Revolutionary War. The approach to military training today has changed. Operating from an abundant state of mind is now a critical part of successful execution of course delivery. The LeCroy Center's Dallas TeleCollege (DTC) has been delivering education to the military since the early 1990s, when the Navy College Program for At Sea College Education (NCPACE) was the primary focus. Putting technology-based programs on board Navy ships at sea was the target. Telecourses placed on ships' computers, followed by CD-ROM based courses, were the only answer at that time. Today, this transformation thinking has provided DTC with technology uses that are changing military education on forts, bases, and remote locations worldwide.

This year's efforts focus on adding a second line of iPod courses that use model technology concepts. For the past two years, the initial pilot consisted of five courses aboard ships stationed on both coasts. There is a planned initiative to move these five onto other devices, including the District's iPad, iPhone, and Wimba systems, for use on both small and large platform ships while expanding the number of courses significantly. This leveraging strategy has provided teams with more support and encouragement to do more by allowing them to be apart of the creativity and innovation process. This team is now considering how to assist Global Education Mobile (GEM) students of the Air Force with devices that carry core curriculum and various humanities courses to airmen anywhere in the world.

Because of these technology-based initiatives and the 24/7 support of technical help desks and call centers, the constant availability of financial aid support, and a bevy of direct communications points of access including fax, email, text messaging, and 800 number access to our social network advisors, the DTC at the LeCroy Center was named for the third straight year as one of the nation's top twenty Military Friendly colleges.

### **Achieving Abundance Through Teaching with Technology**

One of the most and important key areas of the abundant transformation process occurred in the teaching and learning sector, often referred to as the heart of the district. This transformation involved understanding the needs of the faculty. There are many tools and resources available to faculty but many of them were not capitalizing on them, which diminishes the district's abilities to capitalize on its wealth of talent and available resources. To invigorate faculty to maximize the available resources, a new initiative was implemented for new first-year faculty that encompassed multiple levels of training depending on their skill set, to ensure that they were trained on all technology devices, software, and support systems.

This initial year was seen as one of the best examples of faculty boot camp in higher education. The

focus on access and use of technology is about one-third of the camp, with the remainder on teaching, learning, and creating the engaged student. Faculty were able to leave this training with access to simple classrooms and advanced Smart Classrooms at each college, and knowledge of the many support systems available to them at the LeCroy Center. More resources are being taken advantage of by new faculty allowing a new state of abundance of faculty capabilities to take shape.

### **Conclusion**

Operating in abundant state of mind, calls for new type of transformation to occur. Asking for more when there is a scarcity of resources available has no place in this current time. There must be a champion to transform how college's and universities operate and a leadership team to embrace this different type of philosophy. Gaining leverage on the opportunities that exist and helping faculty and staff to reach their full potential is challenging but a reinvigorating process. Approaching abundance as an organization is feasible but there must be a renewed transformation to take place, not just in the allocation of resources, but in the state of mind.

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